



Consulate General of the Republic of Turkey
455 N. Cityfront Plaza Drive
Suite 2900
Chicago, IL 60611

Hon. Phil Pavlov
Senator
Senate of the State of Michigan

Chicago, 15 April 2016

Dear Mr. Senator,

As I understand that the Senate Education Committee will discuss the HB 4493 on Tuesday, April 19th, I would like to bring to your kind attention once again the following.

My mission strongly supports sound education regarding the Holocaust and genocide.

However, I must note that the references in HB 4493 to the so-called "Armenian genocide" are not true. There was no "systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately 1.500.000 Armenians by the Ottoman Turkish Empire". These allegations have no historical or legal justification and merely a propaganda, based on one narrative.

With this bill, the Michigan Legislature gives credit to and even legalize the same propaganda used by the murderers, committed over 230 armed attacks, killing 71 innocent people, including 31 Turkish diplomats. 4 of my colleagues were assassinated in this country. With this bill Michigan starts teaching hatred.

As I sadly see that the bill puts the "Armenian genocide" claims on equal footing with the Holocaust, I would like to quote Princeton University Ottoman Historian, Professor Bernard Lewis :

"... to make this a parallel with the holocaust in Germany, you would have to assume the Jews of Germany had been engaged in an armed rebellion against the German state, collaborating with the allies against Germany. That in the deportation order, the cities of Hamburg and Berlin were exempted, persons in the employment of the state were exempted, and the deportation only applied to the Jews of Germany proper, so that when they got to Poland they were welcomed and sheltered by the Polish Jews. This seems to me a rather absurd parallel".

And finally, I must also kindly bring to your attention the very likely situation that, if enacted, this bill will negatively impact the bilateral relations between Turkey and the State of Michigan, undermining my efforts, as the Consul General, to further promote USD 700M trade and economic cooperation and to attract more students and academics from Turkey for the Michigan universities.

I therefore, I would like to respectfully ask you not to support HB 4493 as it stands.

Umut Acar
Umut Acar

With my kind regards,

Submitted by
Consul General
Umut Acar

Mr Chairman,

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

First of all let me thank the Michigan Legislature for their efforts to include Holocaust and genocide education in public schools curricula.

My mission strongly supports sound education regarding the Holocaust and the crime genocide.

For centuries, my people have kept their doors open to those flee from oppression. It was Jews in 15th century and during the Second World War we welcomed, and it is three million Syrian refugees today that my people host.

During the second WW my colleagues in Europe issued forged passports and IDs to save as many Jews as they can from the hands of Nazis.

And today, I am here to express my regrets and objection to the efforts to portray my people same as Nazis. Because it is not just unfair. It is untrue, unjust and it is an insult.

Firstly,

The references in HB 4493 to the so-called "Armenian genocide" are legally and historically not true. There was no "systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately 1.500.000 Armenians by the Ottoman Turkish Empire". I don't even know what it means "Ottoman Turkish Empire" since there was no such entity with that name in the history.

Besides, total Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire never actually reached that number.

This is exactly the same propaganda used by Armenian terrorism that claimed 71 lives, and seriously injured over 700 worldwide. I appear here in the honor of six of my colleagues who were assassinated in North America. 4 of them were killed in this very country.

Turkish Americans were silenced by this Armenian terrorism for many years and not many people remember that. Like not many people know about Armenia's continued invasions and occupation of western Azerbaijan for decades.

Secondly,

It is my duty to follow and to report the Foreign Policy issues to my Embassy in DC and to my Ministry in Ankara so that they can raise these issues with the State Department and the White House.

With this bill, the State of Michigan presents a completely different view on a foreign policy issue, than the official US position maintained in a bipartisan way for decades now. My country appreciates US foreign policy which is to not prejudice Turkey or the Ottoman Empire, but to promote greater understanding between Armenians and Turks. Thanks to this policy the two peoples can build an honest narrative of their shared past of 1000 years, of which the final 20 years was marred by conflict.

Frankly, I find myself struggling to reconcile Michigan's foreign policy with that of the United States federal government's.

Despite enormous pressures every year, while the President and the State Department of the US acting in the best interest of the US do not give credit to "Armenian genocide" allegations, the State of Michigan sees no problem in insulting my people, my history, my nation and my country.

The state of Michigan, in this bill introduces a hate language against Turkish identity and openly insults a nation that has been a long time NATO ally, friend, and strategic partner to US, in such a critical moment of the history while Turkey and the US are fighting against ISIL and global terrorism; While Armenia is hosting Russian troops and military bases to annex Ukraine and to support brutal regime of Assad in Syria

Thirdly,

HB 4493, if passed as worded, will most likely have a negative impact on relations not only in Washington DC due to the inherent contradiction between Michigan and U.S. federal policy, but also between Turkey and the State of Michigan. As Consul General, while I am charged with the duty to protect people of Turkish heritage from hatred as prejudice as threatened by HB 4493, I am also charged with the duty of promoting trade and economic cooperation worth over \$700M, including thousands of Turkish students and academicians who are learning and teaching in Michigan universities and colleges. HB 4493 will be undermining my efforts to this end.

I commend thousands of Turkish Americans in Michigan and friends of American diversity who have launched a campaign against HB 4493: "Teach peace and not hatred".

Finally,

Diversity brings with it important responsibilities for Michigan. I would suggest that one such responsibility is to be fair in reconciling differences that may exist between communities.

The Turkish American National Steering Committee (TASC) has provided you Addendum 5, which is the statement of the U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations, which calls for more discussion, less accusation, on this extremely sensitive matter.

Here, I speak not only for Turkish Americans, but also the broader Muslim American community of Michigan, in urging greater sensitivity and respect.

If Michigan Legislature wishes help Turkish and Armenian communities to reconcile the different historical narratives then it should support Turkey's proposal to set up an independent

historians committee to investigate the issue. Like the Australian government and the Vatican did recently.

With this in mind, I respectfully ask that you not support HB 4493 as it is currently worded.

Thank you.

Gokhan Ozalp

- Elected regional vice president of the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA)
- Resident of Walled Lake, Michigan
- Software engineer and manager for a major medical device manufacturer

Dr. Michael M. Gunter

- Professor of political science at Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee where he teaches courses on international relations, international organizations, international law, American foreign policy, European politics, and American politics, among others.
- He is one of only two others who have won the two most prestigious faculty awards at his university: The Outstanding Faculty Award in Teaching and the Outstanding Faculty Award in Research (The Caplenor Award).
- Gunter is the Secretary-General of the EU Turkey Civic Commission (EUTCC) headquartered in Brussels.

Consul General Umut Acar

- Consul General of the Republic of Turkey in Chicago.
- Former Chief of Cabinet of the Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

About The Turkish Institute for Progress

The Turkish Institute for Progress (TIP) was founded to help foster a stronger understanding of Turkey-U.S. relations and its vital and strategic role. With a deeper understanding of the role Turkey plays in promoting U.S. interests, particularly on security issues, TIP aims to build a strong bond between these longtime allies. With TIP members and its growing grassroots efforts, TIP works to help educate U.S. decision makers on this vital partnership and the unique challenges Turkey faces.

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